

A CRITICISM OF THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN—MORE ELABORATE CHURCH SERVICES WANTED.

MR. EDITOR,—I am sorry to seem to utter disapproval of any of the sentiments expressed in your editorials which are generally excellent, and I have often praised, and recommended THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN for its broad catholicity of spirit, yet I have often been grieved during the last year or two to notice a narrow sectarianism creeping in. Especially has this been the case when anything regarding the mother church has come up; your reports were generally one-sided, and you seldom have had a good word to say for her. In a late issue you rail against some of the reformations being made in the churches and services in Scotland. I grant that much being done there is going beyond Presbyterianism proper, but then there never has been a reformation yet but has had many extremists. So in this. You are wrong, I think, in ascribing all this desire and endeavor after a fuller and more churchly form of worship to be due to episcopacy. On the Continent, where episcopacy has no place outside Romanism, we see this same seeking after improvement, and our churches there, if Dr. Matthews' report be true, are away ahead of the Church of Scotland in the use of forms. While this need has not been so much felt in America, owing to the tendency to run the services into concerts and sensational lectures, yet it is felt, and the time is coming when the church will awake and seek more worship.

The Scottish churches are simply getting back to the old days of the Reformation before the church services were degraded and stripped by English Independency and Anabaptists. The evil started then grows apace. In our day we hear even ministers speak of audiences, and no name is more common for the sanctuary than auditorium. Too true it is, alas! the Presbyterian pulpit and minister have disappeared; now we have only a platform, a desk, and a preacher. I don't think I've seen over a couple of pulpits in our church in America. The congregation which should meet to worship and call upon the great name of the Lord our God has gone; now we have an audience gathered to listen to a sensational address, and have their ears tickled by solos, quartettes, and other things. Perhaps it is as well churches have also passed away to make room for auditoriums; everything fitted for hearing, little for worship. In prayer we are no longer permitted to take the old scriptural historic and Presbyterian posture of standing, and to kneel we are ashamed, or our auditoriums won't permit it; so as we come to God bawling our sins and seeking forgiveness we loll in our seats and take our comfort. Befitting posture, truly! In church interiors there are worse things right amongst us than in St. Cuthbert's.

You sneer at the gown, which you are pleased to call clerical millinery (though why it more than a white tie, I don't know). I think it ill becomes the editor of our leading church paper to revile that official dress which is dear to all churchmen with historic feeling. The Geneva gown is a grave and seemly dress; it adds dignity to the service, and is one of the connecting links with the old church. I hope to see the day when every minister of the church shall, in the performance of his public duties, be becomingly attired in the pulpit robe. Every minister who thinks anything of the history and historic continuity of our church, and who has any reverence for the old ways of our forefathers, should honor, preserve, and walk in the old ways, when these detract nothing from the true spiritual worship of the sanctuary, but add much to the service. I have no great love of clerical dress outside the church and wear very little of it, but in the public service of the church I am a minister of the historic church of Columbia, of Knox, and of the Fathers, and I will earnestly seek to maintain the dignified yet simple service of that church, with all that pertains to that service. I hope that in the near future the Assembly will give a deliverance on this subject, instructing or advising all its ministers while conducting public worship to wear this his-

toric, dignified, becoming and comfortable insignia. In the meantime Presbyteries might take the matter up. As regards hoods I have nothing to say, that is a matter of individual preference. I see no objection to divinity hoods. I would like to see our Moderator of Assembly wear his hood in Assembly, as do the Moderators of both the Scottish Assemblies; and surely no one can say a word against the Presbyterianism of either Blaikie, or Smith.

In regard to conducting services this matter has been discussed in your columns lately. I think our ministers would be benefited by reading the directory of worship and form of government bound up in the Confession. Knox's Book of Common Order would open the eyes of some who rail against high churchism. I think a church service society would benefit our church. Ministers can get a great deal of valuable assistance from the Book of Common Order of the Church of Scotland, of course using their own common sense in the using of it. In closing I may say I have no sympathy with this ultramontane liturgicalism which is creeping into the Church of Scotland, nor where churchmen go aping Episcopalians or any other denomination. I am strongly opposed to the ordinary use of a liturgy, but I do desire to see the services of the church raised to a higher plane and the churchly views of the Reformers readopted.

AN OLD-FASHIONED CHURCHMAN.

TORONTO EXPERIENCES.

Having spent a few weeks in your beautiful city lately, I have thought that a brief account of some of my experiences there might be of interest to your readers. I will not go into raptures over the beauty of Ontario's capital; you have perhaps had enough of that lately. I may be allowed to express the hope, however, that Toronto may long remain, as now, a shining example among American cities for the quiet, orderly Sabbath observance which it enforces and enjoys—and this for the sake of all classes, the working-man especially. The argument that it is a pity to deprive the working-man of the chance to get a breath of fresh air seems to me to have little force in your city where green grass and fresh air are within easy reach of any part of it. Besides, what about the six or seven months of winter? I suppose the working-man then longs for the opportunity to have his nose nipped by a blizzard and to wade through snow-drifts! Those in favor of a Sunday-car service seem to have altogether overlooked the months of winter in their arguments.

On two or three Sunday afternoons I paid a visit to the Queen's Park, still apparently a favorite resort of all classes. It seems to me a pity that public speaking there on Sunday afternoons had to be forbidden; or rather, it is a pity that the privilege, when enjoyed, was so abused as to render the prohibition necessary. For I think that those discussions, if properly conducted, might have been beneficial in many ways. It is well to know what is uppermost in the minds of the masses. It is well to have one's ignorance corrected or supplemented by the knowledge of others. I don't think much of the Christian who takes no interest in what is seething in the minds and hearts of others, who are perhaps not so highly favored socially and religiously as himself. Our pious elders and deacons (whom I would not disparage as a class) might, by an occasional visit to the Park on Sunday afternoons, learn something more practically useful than what books of devotion are fitted to teach. If the minds of the masses are in danger of becoming infected with extreme and erroneous views, how can we effectually apply the remedy, unless we can properly diagnose the case?

Conversational discussions, however, are still carried on among groups of people here and there; the favorite subjects being the prevailing hard times, the recent strike in the States, single tax, socialism and religion; the pros and cons being generally sufficiently numerous to keep up the interest; an occasional voice even being raised in behalf of anarchy and the anarchists. The agnostic and the infidel can be heard there airing their views; and it is well to listen to what they have to say. The training is worth something to the individual, that enables him to hear or to reply to the arguments of an opponent with patience and perfect good nature. To think and to express its thought freely is necessary to a healthy mind. Utter stagnation of thought and feeling breeds all moral corruption, as we see in those countries—fortunately gradually disappearing from the map of the world—where the priest (if not too besotted to think at all) does all the thinking for the people. I once stood beside a gentleman in the Park listening to a lively discussion of some social or religious topic, when he turned to me

and remarked that these questions gave him no concern—that they were all settled for him here (tapping his forehead) long ago. I knew at once what he meant—viz., that the church had settled them for him, and that all he had to do was simply to acquiesce. I, of course, could not acquiesce in such a view, holding as I do that God never intended the church to come between Himself and the individual conscience, or that the church's teaching and explanation of Divine truth should at all supersede the necessity of the individual mind thinking them out for itself and making them its own. The church is not the teacher of divine truth except as subsidiary to the Bible—God's own word. The church that dethrones the Bible and usurps the place which it alone should occupy in men's hearts and consciences, is well described by the Apostle John in the Book of Revelation, chap. ii. v. 20, as "that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess to teach and to seduce my servants." Far better for an honest mind to think freely, even though erroneously, than to stagnate under the deadly blight of an authority which demands unthinking and unquestioning obedience; for the honest mind, accustomed to do its own thinking, will be likely soon to work itself free from error, and to value all the more and be influenced all the more by truth thus made its own.

But I see, Mr. Editor, that my letter is already growing long, and I have not yet touched upon the subject which prompted me to take up my pen, and to touch upon it now and do it justice would make this letter far too long; therefore, with your permission, I will reserve it for a future issue of THE PRESBYTERIAN; and will close now by an earnest plea for a more intimate study of the Bible by our ministers and people. I believe that the church has been so much engrossed with the spiritual aspects of Christianity, i.e., with the salvation of the souls of men—which is, of course, confessedly its first and most important office—that the social aspect of Christianity, the church's obligation to care for the temporal welfare of its members, has been comparatively neglected. Any one who frequents the Queen's Park on Sunday afternoons or who carefully reads the daily papers, cannot help observing how this conviction is gaining ground in the minds of the masses. There is a peculiar form of infidelity fast spreading, especially in our large commercial centres; not in respect of the Deity, or of Christ, but of the church. Hence the "lapsed masses," hence the tendency of the working-classes, while taking increased interest in their unions and guilds, to drift away from the church, or rather the churches, which by their never-ceasing, ever-increasing demands for money create the impression, quite naturally, that the poor man is not wanted in them. And yet if the wealth of the church were consecrated to Christ, as it should be, there would be plenty for all purposes. Without dwelling upon this topic now, which is aside from my purpose, let me close by expressing the belief that the church's greatest need at present is to be impressed with the conviction that being bought with such a price, we and all we possess are not our own but Christ's, i.e., the church's, for the church is His visible representative upon earth. Christ says, "Fear not, little flock;" but how many of the little flock live on the verge of extreme poverty all the time and in constant dread of it! I could mention facts in connection with some of the luxurious churches of Toronto that ought to bring the blush to the cheek of every elder and manager. And I am afraid there are even ministers in your city who would not care to touch with a ten-foot pole such a text, e.g., as this: "But who so hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" What a searching text that is! How can the millionaire stand up before it? I plead for a more honest and thorough study of the Bible in its application to the social and temporal needs of mankind. Our pastors are in danger of making us sanctified, spiritual Epicureans. Let not our motto be, "Look out for number one;" but "Look out for number one another," in accordance with that text, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." What I am pleading for, in fact, is that the fundamental law of Christ's kingdom should be more extensively studied and observed in the church. The practice of it is the richest sanctifying influence the church can make use of—far superior to prayer meetings even. May the time soon come, at all events, when it will be impossible for a wealthy brother to rise in his luxurious pew and hypocritically sing that beautiful hymn:—

"Jesus, I my cross have taken,
All to leave and follow Thee,"

while his poor brother in the next pew cannot sing it on account of the lump in his throat!

Hoping you will forgive the incoherency of my closing remarks on a subject concerning which I should like to have the opportunity of explaining myself more fully, I remain, yours,

COUNTRY COUSIN.

Windsor, October, 1894.

Christian Endeavor.

WHAT CHRIST HEALS AND HOW.

REV. W. S. MCTAVISH, B.D., ST. GEORGE.

Oct. 28.—Matt. 8: 5-17.

This is a broader subject than, at first sight, it appears to be. It is probable that when Christ was here in person, many of the Jews regarded Him as One Who possessed great power over bodily diseases, but they did not so clearly recognize His ability in dealing with maladies of the soul. True, a number did consult Him with reference to their spiritual condition but a very much larger number sought His help on behalf of friends who were suffering from physical diseases or infirmities. It would seem as if we were now in danger of running to the other extreme. When we suffer distress of soul we fly to Him and we realize that His word can give a kind relief to every pang we feel, but we are apt to overlook the fact that He is interested in our bodies as well as in our souls. When we are ill, we consult our family physician and if our health is restored we feel grateful to him for his skilful services, but we should not forget that between the earthly physician and us, there stood Another Who had power to wound or to bind up, to save life or to destroy it. If the remedies employed were efficacious, it was Christ the Great Creator who put medicinal qualities into the barks, the roots, the leaves, the minerals; and if the medical man handled the case with skill it was Christ the Great Physician who endowed him for his task.

When Christ was here in person the physical troubles and disorders of mankind were, in a very certain and definite sense, laid upon Him; He made them His own, and He showed that He did so by applying His Almighty power to remove them. When our diseases are cured now, it is Christ's almighty power which accomplishes the happy result.

But this topic may be viewed in another aspect. George Horne says, "The body experienceth the melancholy consequences of Adam's offence, and is subject to many infirmities; but the soul is subject to as many. What is pride but lunacy; what is anger, but a fever; what is avarice, but a dropsy; what is lust, but a leprosy; what is sloth, but a dead palsy? Perhaps there are spiritual maladies similar to all corporeal ones."

Thomas Fuller says, "Our understandings are so bad that they understand not their own badness; our wills, which are the queens of our souls, become the vassals of sin; our memory, like jet, good only to draw straws and treasure up trifles of no moment; our consciences, through errors in our own understanding, sometimes accusing us when we are innocent, sometimes acquitting us when we are guilty; our affections all disaffected and out of order. . . . We love what we should hate and hate where we should love; we fear where no fear is, and fear not where we ought to fear; and all our affections either mistake their object or exceed their due measure."

But these diseases of the soul Christ, the Great Physician, can heal. The understanding He can enlighten so that things are seen in their proper relations and in their true proportions. The will He can renew and bring into conformity with His own holy and righteous will. The affections He can turn into a new and better channel so that they are no longer averse to that which should be loved, nor are they set upon that which should be hated and despised. When the soul is diseased with pride, He humbles its haughtiness; when it is inflamed with anger, He checks the inflammation; when it is swollen with avarice, He reduces the swelling; and when it is palsied with sloth, He stimulates its sluggishness. He, the Great Physician, removes the cause of the disease, and when sin, the cause of spiritual suffering, is eradicated, the disease must take its flight. No malady ever baffled His skill, for all power is given unto Him in heaven and in earth.

A deceitful peace is more hurtful than open war.